

Application No. 10/674,257
Amendment dated December 19, 2005
Reply to Office Action of September 21, 2005

Remarks

This Amendment is in response to the Office Action dated September 21, 2005 and is due on or before December 21, 2005.

Claims 3-4, 6-8 and 10 remain in this application. Claims 1-2, 5 and 9 have been canceled. Claim 10 has been added.

Claims 1-7 and 9 were rejected as anticipated by Wetzel et al (Wetzel) USP 5,131,681. Wetzel shows an occupant protection system with a seat belt component and a knee bolster component. Wetzel operates differently from the present invention. In Wetzel, his knee bolster is capable of moving in and out from a stored position to a position near the knee of the seated occupant on an almost continuous basis depending upon whether the seat belt is buckled or not. With the seat belt unbuckled, the knee bolster is moved outward adjacent the unbuckled occupant; this is opposite the teachings of the present invention in which the knee bolster (of the present invention) remains in its stored position until an accident is sensed, even if the occupant is not using the seat belt and the seat belt is not buckled. In the present invention the knee bolster is moved to a protective position only after sensing an accident and only if the occupant has not buckled the seat belt. Cooper does not teach the present invention. Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Claims 1 and 9 were rejected as being anticipated by Cooper USP 6,494,284. Cooper proposes a variety of occupant protection systems, which include a variety of sensors; however he does not teach the status of the seat belt buckle can be used to deactivate a knee bolster system. Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

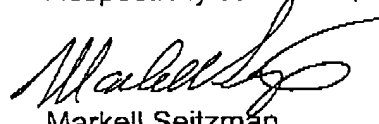
Claim 1 was rejected as anticipated by Kracht et al (Kracht) USP 5,374,105. Kracht's panel 18 is not a deployable knee bolster but a lifting mechanism, which helps keep the occupant from falling to the floor (see column 2, lines 50 -59) during an accident. Kracht would seem to be classified as an "anti-submarining" system. When the panel is activated, the occupant's legs are raised, which in turn makes it more difficult for the occupant during a crash to slide forward and off the seat

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(submarining). Kracht does not teach the present invention. Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

In view of the aforementioned, it is respectfully urged that the present application be reconsidered, the claims allowed, and the case passed to issue.

Respectfully submitted,



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